

Escape



Bicycles in Beijing

The two-wheel tour craze has reached China, where The Opposite House hotel has teamed up with Bespoke Beijing to offer a cycling tour of the capital. Surprisingly, Beijing is ranked as one of the world's most cycle-friendly cities, and the tour kicks off at Ditan Park and takes in the history of the bicycle in China as well as the city's highlights. Refuel with some delicious traditional Beijing snacks along the way. Prices start at £338 per person. theoppositehouse.com



Paddington fares

Until the end of this month, Heathrow Express has dropped its ticket prices in a bid to get more leisure travellers on the service that runs from Heathrow to Paddington in 15 minutes. The deal is online only, and applies to tickets booked seven days in advance. Singles start from £15 (normally £21) and returns £29 (£34).



STAYING AT THE PINK PALACE

Visitors will be queuing to stay at one of Jaipur's oldest palaces next month when the Raj Mahal Palace reopens as a hotel. Home to Indian royalty since 1729, the palace has played host to the likes of Jackie Kennedy, the Queen, Prince Philip and Lord and Lady Mountbatten. Now it has been taken over by leading hotel group Suján and decorated in show-stopping colours by Adil Ahmad, director of Charbagh Good Earth, India's rather heavenly lifestyle and homeware brand. Rooms from £350 per night, from December. sallyandalice.com



Ski swap shop

As skis become increasingly specialised for different conditions and airlines continue to charge ever-higher fees for carriage, the appeal to own a pair is waning. Intersport is offering great rental deals on equipment that includes top-level skis such as Rossignol's Soul 7, Sin 7 and Savory 7 from around €8 a day — and you can swap them as many times as you like to try different kit. intersport-rent-france.co.uk

The HOT List

Live like a king, detox post-Christmas and cycle Beijing

Compiled by **Abigail Butcher**



Eat, drink and be very healthy

Expecting a few blowouts over the festive period? Then book up a Mindful Detox retreat for January to counteract the excess. Lucknam Park in Wiltshire is offering a three-day detox from January 16–18, including mindfulness, nutrition and yoga sessions. Prices from £652 per person, per stay including meals. The retreat will run every quarter from January. lucknampark.co.uk



RESORT TO AN ELECTRIC CAR

The electric car revolution hits the Alps this winter, with the Renault Twizy becoming the latest way to travel around French ski resorts. Alpe d'Huez and nearby Serre Chevalier each have 40 of the cars equipped with snow chains and ski racks — and available for €20 a day or €60 a week. If ice driving is your thing, you can even race a Twizy in La Clusaz. keymoov.com, serre-chevalier.com, laclusaz.com

Are we there yet? Oh, yes!

A cottage in the Forest of Dean is the perfect retreat for parents and their kids. By Tracey Blake

TRYING to find a weekend hide-out that promises a treat for parents (nice accommodation and good service) as well as fun for kids (child-friendly staff and exciting local activities) can be tricky. But the Tudor Farmhouse Hotel gets the balance just right.

We arrived slightly frazzled after our drive to Gloucestershire but were put at ease by the staff, who ushered us into the bar for a stress-busting gin and tonic and a 6.30pm dinner with Minnie, four, and Monty, two. The waitress didn't bat an eyelid when Monty deposited his homemade bread into his lemonade, or when Minnie asked for a fruit salad 'without any aubergine' – and our food was really impressive (lemon sole with clams and samphire).

The next day we enjoyed a delicious breakfast before exploring the hotel gardens and discovering ducks, chickens and a field of ponies.

After a busy day out it was lovely



Getting away from it all: The grounds of the Tudor Farmhouse Hotel; below, one of the hotel's oak-beamed bedrooms



to return to the Cottage Suite, which comprises a cosy living room (with a sofa bed and mini kitchen) downstairs and a huge double bedroom and en suite upstairs. Robes, fluffy white towels and White Company products in the bathroom added to the 'and relax' vibe. As did the marvellous Cosmopolitan I had later

that evening. We eschewed the homely bar area for an early tea with the children, but certainly didn't feel hard done by after another excellent meal (my salted caramel dessert with chocolate crumb was a winner).

USP: It's all about the food and service. Chef Martin Adams serves up inventive and beautifully presented

seasonal dishes using ingredients sourced within a 20-mile radius or picked from the hotel's kitchen garden. The food won Cotswold Life Hotel Restaurant of the Year 2013 and has generated rave reviews in Condé Nast Traveller and Tatler.

Who goes there? Families and couples enjoying a relaxed weekend

away. If you're the latter, don't worry about being stuck in a room with a howling toddler – the owners manage a good degree of separation.

Venture out: Puzzlewood (puzzlewood.net), an ancient woodland full of bizarre tree and rock formations, is two minutes up the road. JRR Tolkien apparently got his inspiration for the forests of Middle Earth here. Another hit was Perrygrove Railway (perrygrove.co.uk), which offers rides on steam trains as well as treehouses and an indoor village. Then there are the Clearwell Caves (clearwellcaves.com), where you can explore underground passageways. If you're not worn out yet, you can hire bikes at Pedalabikeaway Cycle Centre (pedalabikeaway.co.uk) in the Canop Valley in the heart of the glorious Forest of Dean.

Getting there: You'll need to travel by car but it's easily accessible from London, Cardiff and Bristol on the M4, or from the North on the M5.

Doubles from £95. The Tudor Farmhouse Hotel, Clearwell, Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, tudorfarmhousehotel.co.uk

axs[™]
/acc-ess/ to the best tickets

barclayscard
BRITISH SUMMER TIME
Friday Park

TAYLOR SWIFT

Saturday 27 June
Hyde Park, London

AXS.com